

Current Class: UNCLASSIFIED
Current Handling: SBU
Document Number: 2002BOGOTA02045

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7254
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
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SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, SNAR, MASS, PTER, PHUM, CO
SUBJECT: VISIT OF STAFFDEL DYER

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SUMMARY

1. (SBU) A CONGRESSIONAL STAFF DELEGATION LED BY MAJORITY CLERK AND STAFF DIRECTOR FOR THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS JAMES W. DYER, AND MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR FOR THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS R. SCOTT LILLY, VISITED CARTAGENA AND BOGOTA, COLOMBIA FEBRUARY 15 - 19, 2002. OTHER STAFFDEL MEMBERS INCLUDED MINORITY CLERK

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
DATE/CASE ID: 02 JUL 2004 200303455

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FOREIGN OPERATIONS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE MARK MURRAY, PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS THERESE MCCAULIFFE, PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS VALERIE BALDWIN, DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER FRANK KALDER, AND DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATIVE SPECIALIST COLLEEN F. WHELEN. THE DELEGATION MET WITH THE EMBASSY COUNTRY TEAM; COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT ANDRES PASTRANA; ARMED FORCES COMMANDER GENERAL FERNANDO TAPIAS; NAVY ADMIRAL GUILLERMO ENRIQUE BARRERA HURTADO; DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE LUIS ERNESTO GILIBERT VARGAS, AND CHIEF OF THE ANTI-NARCOTICS DIRECTORATE OF THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE (DIRAN) GENERAL GUSTAVO SOCHA SALAMANCA. THE DELEGATION ALSO TRAVELED TO THE COLOMBIAN ANTI-NARCOTICS POLICE BASE IN SANTA MARTA, AND THE COLOMBIAN NAVY BASE IN CARTAGENA. MEMBERS EXPRESSED PARTICULAR INTEREST IN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND MILITARY COUNTERDRUG EFFORTS, THE FUTURE OF THE PEACE PROCESS, AND HOST NATION AND U.S. EFFORTS AGAINST TERRORISM IN COLOMBIA.

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END SUMMARY.

VISIT TO CNP COUNTER-NARCOTICS BASE; POLICE ASSISTANCE
REQUESTS

2. (SBU) THE DELEGATION ARRIVED IN BARRANQUILLA LATE ON FEBRUARY 15, AND WERE TRANSPORTED TO ACCOMMODATIONS IN CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA. ON FEBRUARY 16 THE STAFFDEL VISITED THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE BASE AT SANTA MARTA, AND RECEIVED A BRIEFING ON COUNTER-DRUG OPERATIONS FROM ANTI-NARCOTICS POLICE DIRECTOR GENERAL GUSTAVO SOCHA SALAMANCA. THE STAFFDEL ALSO PARTICIPATED IN A CEREMONY AT SANTA MARTA TURNING OVER TWO NEW ARMORED VEHICLES TO THE ANTI-NARCOTICS POLICE (IN MEMORY OF THREE OFFICERS RECENTLY KILLED IN THEIR VEHICLE BY AMBUSH), AND THE DEDICATION OF A NEW ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE FACILITY.

3. (SBU) GENERAL SOCHA BRIEFED ON HIS VISION FOR ENHANCEMENTS AND A PERCEIVED NEED FOR FOUR OPERATIONS BASES FOR ANTI-NARCOTICS POLICE (A VISION REINFORCED DURING A SUBSEQUENT BRIEF BY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE LUIS ERNESTO GILIBERT VARGAS, IN BOGOTA). THIS WOULD REQUIRE EXPANSION (OR CREATION) OF FACILITIES AT SANTA MARTA, LARANDIA, SAN JOSE DEL GUAVIARE, AND TULUA TO ACCOMMODATE 10 HELICOPTERS (INCLUDING 1 BLACKHAWK), 5 TO 8

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SPRAY AIRCRAFT, AND 1 FIXED WING (CESSNA CARAVAN) AIRCRAFT
TO BE STATIONED AT EACH OF THE FOUR BASES. POLICE
ENHANCEMENTS WOULD RESULT IN A TOTAL OF 3,200 ANTI-
NARCOTICS POLICE (IN 19 COMPANIES) TO WORK OUT OF THESE
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FACILITIES. GENERAL SOCHA RELATED THAT THIS FOUR BASE
CONCEPT WOULD CONSERVE FUEL, PROVIDE FOR RAPID RESPONSE AND
DEPLOYMENT, AND THE TROOP AND AIRFRAME ENHANCEMENTS WERE
NEEDED TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SECURITY AND IMPROVE FUMIGATION
COVERAGE. GENERAL SOCHA ALSO ADVISED THAT THE AMAZONAS
AREA OF COLOMBIA DID NOT PRESENT A SIGNIFICANT THREAT IN
TERMS OF DRUG PRODUCTION OR DISTRIBUTION AT THIS POINT IN
TIME.

4. (SBU) STAFFDEL MEMBERS JAMES DYER AND SCOTT LILLY
EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE LOW "OPERATIONAL READINESS" RATE
FOR POLICE HELICOPTERS (ESPECIALLY BLACKHAWKS), QUOTED AS
APPROXIMATELY 40% BY GENERAL SOCHA. SCOTT LILLY EXPRESSED
CONCERN THAT WITHOUT ADEQUATE RESOURCES IN THE FIELD THE
CLANDESTINE LABORATORIES COULD SIMPLY RELOCATE WITHIN
COLOMBIA, WHICH GENERAL SOCHA IMPLIED COULD BE PREVENTED
THROUGH COVERAGE PROVIDED BY THE AFOREMENTIONED FOUR BASE
CONCEPT. THE STAFFDEL WAS SUBSEQUENTLY TRANSPORTED BY
HELICOPTER TO AN OPERATIONAL SITE (PREVIOUSLY SECURED)
WHERE A "GO-FAST" BOAT UTILIZED TO TRANSPORT DRUGS HAD BEEN

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7255
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
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AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
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SEIZED.

VISIT TO CARTAGENA NAVY BASE

5. (SBU) ON FEBRUARY 17, THE STAFFDEL VISITED THE COLOMBIAN NAVY BASE AT CARTAGENA, AND WAS BRIEFED BY ADMIRAL GUILLERMO ENRIQUE BARRERA HURTADO. ADMIRAL BARRERA ADVISED THAT THE COLOMBIAN NAVY WAS VERY ACTIVE IN DRUG INTERDICTION, AND RELATED THAT THE NAVY HAS SEIZED APPROXIMATELY 11.5 TONS OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES THUS FAR IN 2002. THE ADMIRAL ADDRESSED THE DIFFICULTIES IN COMBATING THE "GO-FAST" BOATS USED BY TRAFFICKERS TO TRANSPORT TONS OF DRUGS. THEY ARE VIRTUALLY UNDETECTABLE BY RADAR, AND ARE VERY FAST AND HARD TO CATCH WITHOUT HELICOPTER SUPPORT WHEN INTERCEPTED. HE MENTIONED THAT THE NAVY WAS WORKING ON A PLAN TO UTILIZE SONAR AS A MEANS OF IDENTIFYING AND TRACKING THESE VESSELS FOR INTERCEPT.

6. (SBU) IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS BY STAFFDEL MEMBERS, THE ADMIRAL ESTIMATED THAT APPROXIMATELY 520 METRIC TONS OF COCAINE WAS SHIPPED OUT OF COLOMBIA VIA PACIFIC COAST PORTS, AND APPROXIMATELY 400 METRIC TONS VIA THE NORTH COAST. HE ALSO RELATED THAT PROBLEM AREAS WERE EXISTING COLOMBIAN MARITIME LAWS RELATIVE TO SEARCH AND SEIZURE, AND THE DIFFICULTIES IN OBTAINING SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTION OF TRAFFICKERS INTERDICTION AT SEA. A FISCAL (PROSECUTOR) HAS RECENTLY BEEN ASSIGNED TO ASSIST THE NAVY WITH EVIDENCE GATHERING AND PROSECUTIONS.

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7. (SBU) THE STAFFDEL SUBSEQUENTLY WAS TAKEN TO THE CARTAGENA PORT AUTHORITY AND BRIEFED ON CNP AND PORT AUTHORITY MEASURES TO DENY TRAFFICKER USE OF CARGO VESSELS AND CONTAINERS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES. AFTER A BRIEF TOUR OF THIS FACILITY, THE STAFFDEL DEPARTED CARTAGENA VIA DEA AIRCRAFT ENROUTE TO BOGOTA.

COUNTRY TEAM BRIEFING

8. (SBU) ON FEBRUARY 18, THE COUNTRY TEAM BRIEFED THE STAFFDEL AT THE EMBASSY. STAFFDEL MEMBER MARK MURRAY EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER COMPLIANCE WITH U.S. LAWS REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF CDC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY STUDIES PRIOR TO U.S. SUPPORTED SPRAYING/FUMIGATION OPERATIONS, AND STAFFDEL MEMBERS JAMES DYER AND SCOTT LILLY EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE LOW OPERATIONAL READINESS FIGURES FOR POLICE HELICOPTERS.

9. (SBU) BOTH OF THESE ISSUES WERE ADDRESSED BY NAS DIRECTOR, WITH ASSURANCES THAT THE EMBASSY WAS IN COMPLIANCE WITH U.S. LAW, AND THAT THE OPERATIONAL READINESS RATE FOR POLICE HELICOPTERS WAS ACTUALLY CLOSER TO 60%, AND WOULD IMPROVE AFTER WORKING THROUGH MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTION ISSUES WHICH THE POLICE HANDLE DIFFERENTLY THAN THE MILITARY (E.G. WHO PERFORMS IT, HIRING OF MECHANICS, SCHEDULES, ETC.). HE ALSO INDICATED THAT

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STUDIES REGARDING THE CHEMICAL UTILIZED FOR SPRAY OPERATIONS, GLYPHOSATE, MUST BE COMPLETED BEFORE THE END OF MARCH IN ORDER FOR FY02 MONEY TO BE UTILIZED FOR SPRAY OPERATIONS.

MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PASTRANA

10. (SBU) ON MONDAY, 2/18/02, THE STAFFDEL MET WITH COLOMBIAN PRESIDENT ANDRES PASTRANA. (NOTE: THE VISIT OCCURRED PRIOR TO THE END OF THE FARC SAFEHAVEN AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MILITARY OPERATIONS TO RETAKE IT. END NOTE.) PASTRANA STATED THAT IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN A PEACE PROCESS THERE MUST BE A CEASE-FIRE, AND HE DENOUNCED THE NUMEROUS ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST THE COLOMBIAN INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING THE OIL PIPELINE. PASTRANA ALSO

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EXPRESSED A DESIRE TO UTILIZE RESOURCES CURRENTLY DEDICATED
TO ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORTS IN THE WAR ON THE FARC. PASTRANA
STRESSED THAT THE FARC HAVE NO SUPPORT AMONG THE COLOMBIAN
PEOPLE, AND THAT SEVERAL AUC (PARAMILITARY) GROUPS WERE NOW

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7256
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
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AMEMBASSY QUITO
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FIGHTING AMONGST THEMSELVES ON THE NORTH COAST. PASTRANA
ALSO ASSURED THE STAFFDEL THAT THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY WAS
VERY AWARE OF THE NEED TO BREAK ALL TIES WITH THE
PARAMILITARIES.

11. (SBU) PASTRANA BELIEVES THAT IF THE FARC WERE TO
PROGRESS IN THE PEACE PROCESS THE ELN WOULD LIKELY FOLLOW.

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HE EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT SOUGHT BY THE FARC, TO INCLUDE THE IRA, AND THAT MANY HIGHLY POSITIONED INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL LEADERS WERE TRYING TO HELP FREE THE THREE IRA MEMBERS ARRESTED IN COLOMBIA. PASTRANA HAS TOLD THE FARC THAT AFTER THE 9/11 ATTACKS THE WORLD WILL NOT ACCEPT TERRORIST ACTS, AND THAT A RECENT ATTEMPT BY THE FARC TO DESTROY THE WATER RESERVOIR AT CHINGAZA COULD HAVE KILLED MANY MORE INNOCENT CIVILIANS THAN OCCURRED ON 9/11. PASTRANA RELATED THAT HE WAS DEEPLY MOVED BY A RECENT DEMONSTRATION OF SUPPORT BY A GROUP OF 2500 WOMEN AND 4000 MEN WHO HAVE BEEN HELPED BY PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTED AS PART OF PLAN COLOMBIA.

12. (SBU) PASTRANA ALSO SPOKE BRIEFLY ABOUT VENEZUELA AND RECENT INCURSIONS INTO COLOMBIAN TERRITORY. PASTRANA STATED THAT THE RELATIONSHIP WITH VENEZUELA IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT; HOWEVER, HE HAS BEEN VERY BLUNT WITH THE VENEZUELANES REGARDING THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FARC AND THE RECENT INCURSIONS ON COLOMBIAN SOIL. PASTRANA ALSO STATED THAT THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT, DESPITE AN ARAB POPULATION ON THE COAST, HAS NO PROOF OF ANY AL QUAEDA TIES TO COLOMBIA.

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MILITARY BRIEFING

13. (SBU) THE STAFFDEL ALSO RECEIVED BRIEFINGS FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE LUIS ERNESTO GILBERT VARGAS, CNP JUDICIAL POLICE AND INVESTIGATION DIRECTORATE (DIJIN), SPECIAL INVESTIGATION UNIT (SIU), DEPARTAMENTO ADMINISTRATIVO DE SEGURIDAD (DAS), AND COLOMBIAN ARMED FORCES COMMANDER GENERAL FERNANDO TAPIAS STAHELIN.

14. (SBU) GENERAL TAPIAS BRIEFED ON THE MARKED STATISTICAL IMPROVEMENTS THAT HAVE OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF PLAN COLOMBIA, INCLUDING: COCAINE LABS DESTROYED, PRECURSOR CHEMICALS SEIZED, COCA PLANTS DESTROYED, MUNITIONS SEIZED, AND VEHICLES SEIZED. GENERAL TAPIAS STRESSED AN EXTENSIVE HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING PROGRAM AND AN IMPROVED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS COMPLAINT RECORD. HE INSISTED THAT THE MILITARY CONTINUES A POLICY FORBIDDING COLLABORATION BETWEEN MILITARY PERSONNEL AND PARAMILITARY GROUPS. GENERAL TAPIAS STATED THAT ARMS GOING TO THE FARC ARE COMING FROM NICARAGUA THROUGH PANAMA, MUNITIONS FROM PERU AND FORMER

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EASTERN BLOC COUNTRIES, AND STRESSED THAT THE MILITARY AT THIS POINT HAS NO HARD EVIDENCE THAT THE FARC OR OTHER ARMED GROUPS ARE IN POSSESSION OF SURFACE TO AIR MISSILES. GENERAL TAPIAS STATED THAT THE GOAL OF THE FARC, ACCORDING TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CAPTURED, IS TO PARALYZE THE COUNTRY.

AMBASSADOR'S DINNER: UN AND PETROLEUM INFRASTRUCTURE
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BRIEFINGS

15. (SBU) THE AMBASSADOR HOSTED A DINNER FOR THE STAFFDEL AT WHICH JAMES LEMOYNE, UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN'S SPECIAL ENVOY FOR COLOMBIA, GAVE HIS PERSPECTIVE ON THE PEACE PROCESS WITH COLOMBIA'S ILLEGAL GUERRILLA GROUPS. (NOTE: THIS BRIEFING OCCURRED PRIOR TO THE BREAKDOWN IN TALKS WITH THE FARC AND THE PRESIDENT'S ORDER TO THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY TO RE-TAKE THE FARC'S SAFEHAVEN "DESPEJE".) LEMOYNE STRESSED THE DIFFICULTIES IN MAINTAINING A DIALOGUE WITH THE FARC, BUT AT THE SAME TIME SUGGESTED THAT THE END OF THE PEACE PROCESS COULD LEAD TO HIGH LEVELS OF VIOLENCE, AND THAT NEGOTIATIONS MIGHT NOT BE RENEWED FOR A VERY LONG TIME UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES.

16. (SBU) THE STAFFDEL ALSO RECEIVED A BRIEFING OVER DINNER FROM GUIMER DOMINGUEZ, PRESIDENT OF OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM'S COLOMBIAN OPERATIONS, WHO DISCUSSED THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS FIRM'S CANO LIMON FIELD TO COLOMBIA'S

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ECONOMY. HE RECOUNTED HOW GUERRILLA ATTACKS ON THE
PIPELINE WHICH BRINGS THIS PRODUCT TO PORT HAD LED TO IT
BEING SHUT DOWN FOR SEVEN MONTHS IN 2001, WITH A LOSS TO
COLOMBIA OF USD 400 MILLION. DOMINGUEZ URGED CONGRESSIONAL
SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT BUSH'S INITIATIVE TO INCLUDE IN 2003
FUNDING FOR TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT FOR COLOMBIAN ARMED
FORCES PROTECTING THE PIPELINE.

COMMENT

17. (SBU) THE VISIT OF STAFFDEL DYER WAS AMBITIOUS IN
SCHEDULING MANY ACTIVITIES IN A SHORT TIME, BUT VERY
SUCCESSFUL. THEY TOLD US THEY WERE GRATIFIED TO MEET WITH
SUCH A VARIETY OF INFLUENTIAL GOC LEADERS AND TO VISIT THE
COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE BASE AT SANTA MARTA. THE GOC TOOK
SUBSTANTIAL ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO REAFFIRM ITS
COMMITMENT TO U.S.-SUPPORTED COUNTERNARCOTICS AND
COUNTERTERRORISM EFFORTS TO THIS INFLUENTIAL CONGRESSIONAL
STAFF DELEGATION FOR THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS.

PATTERSON

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